

candidates at both examinations are drawn from classes held by the Society's lady lecturers. With the approach of Christmas, classes are being terminated at many centres, and examinations are being applied for from all parts of the country.

Correspondence.

SHOULD NURSES BE POLITICAL?

DEAR MADAM,—Will you allow me through the medium of your valuable paper to make an appeal to the nurses of our country to add to their noble service by bringing their sympathy and knowledge into the political field.

Why should women be political?

Because politics means the affairs of the nation so far as they are regulated by law, and because these affairs are rightly or wrongly conducted according as the best men and women take part in them or stand aloof.

The other day a clergyman asked me whether I did not think that he was right in being unpolitical, in view of the bitterness of rivalries and the ignoble passions that are sometimes called forth by the strife of parties. My answer was: "That depends on whether politics are necessary. If they are necessary, it is obviously desirable that the best people should take part in them. If they are necessary, and good people stand apart, they are responsible for the evil that they might have remedied."

The reason why women should be political is, that for better or worse, they are a great factor in the progress of mankind. It is not only what they do, but what they leave undone; it is not only what they say, but what they leave unsaid, that makes it easy or difficult for good laws to be made.

The ignorance and apathy of the country, with regard to many fruitful causes of disease and crime, must be laid partly at the doors of those virtuous people who do not recognize that real goodness should be active, and that whilst it remains inactive it is at best but a sleeping partner in the company of our contending qualities.

There is only one mission nobler than that of Healing, and that is the Prevention of Disease; there is only one more devoted ministrant to human suffering than the one who seeks after the battle to bandage bleeding wounds, and that is the Advocate of Peace, who induces armed nations to refer to arbitration rather than to let their industrial populations tear one another into pieces; and it is within the power of all the nurses to combine thus for the highest of human missions.

The heroic woman who risks her life amongst dying soldiery needs but the "added grace" to enter into a crusade against unnecessary war, to perfect her service. The faithful worker in a

squalid district needs but to bring her knowledge, her moral courage, and her sympathy to serve on the Sanitary Boards or Councils that may make those districts clean and pure, to make her, in the completest sense, a Healer.

There are three departments of human endeavour—the *individual*, the *social*, and the *political*.

No woman shrinks from helping her fellow-creatures by her individual effort; on the contrary, to purify or beautify the village, town, or city in which she lives seems to the most old-fashioned woman, a womanly duty. Very few women in these days shrink from social endeavour either, that is, from combining with others to secure what an individual alone cannot effect. For almost every far-reaching purpose, many gifts are required which a multitude can bring where an individual must necessarily fail.

The wisest and bravest women do not hesitate to add political effort to the other two, for this only means that they will join with the whole nation in doing what is right, and not confine themselves to one small band, nor to one limited locality.

I will point out one of the instances of the value of political work, which directly appeal to all who are professional nurses. It is the question of sanitation. Ever since 1875, when the Public Health Act was passed, there have been all kinds of useful sanitary restrictions and instructions, and yet these Acts have, in many cases, remained a dead letter, simply because those who were intrusted with their carrying out were not animated with the living spirit of the reformer and the humanitarian.

Miss Florence Nightingale recently stated, at Leeds, in reference to this, that Boards of Guardians gave the tag end of their time to this subject, which might monopolise the whole of it, and yet not be exhausted. She pointed out that, in many places, the people are herded like pigs; their water supply is contaminated, the soil round their cottages is rotten with decomposing filth, the children are bred in an atmosphere of fever, and the life of many a cottage mother is one long round of toil and battle, with conditions to which no creatures of flesh and blood should be exposed.

Is it not clear that there is a public duty to be performed by the women of this country? Namely, to come forward into public life, if only to secure sanitary conditions for women less happy than themselves, and for children less cared for than their own?

It may be said that, to serve on Boards of Guardians, on District Councils, and on Parish Councils, is not necessarily to be political. The line which timid reformers have tried to draw between local and national government is a fine one and destined to be obliterated by all who once begin faithfully to serve their fellow-creatures.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)